



Jamaica Bay Institute

Fort Tilden Pond Science Fair Project Wins First Prize

The Jamaica Bay Institute supported Ms. Anna Horowitz, an earth science teacher from Prospect Heights High School, and her students in their study of the physical, chemical, and biological characteristics of the Fort Tilden pond, at Gateway National Recreation Area. Two of the students Habte Iassac, 17, and Orin Abel, 16, presented the findings at the All City Science Fair Competition held on May 29th at the New York Hall of Science, and won first prize.

Over 1200 students throughout NYC competed in this science fair. It was an auspicious occasion for Prospect Heights High School, an underperforming High School in an underserved area of Brooklyn, to win amongst traditional favorites such as Brooklyn Tech and James Madison High Schools.

In addition to the prestige of winning first place, Habte received a \$40,000 scholarship to Brooklyn Polytechnic University, where he intends to enroll this fall. He and Orin both won \$150 savings bonds and new microscopes. "Winning this has opened my mind and made me think about pursuing a career in science. It's a wonderful thing," said Habte. Orin was equally excited about winning.



Ms. Anna Horowitz collecting water samples from the Fort Tilden Pond

School spirit hits Heights

Surprise science fair win a boost for 'underperformer'

By ELIZABETH HAYS

Prospect Heights High School is savoring a first-place victory in a recent citywide science fair competition — the school's biggest science win in 25 years, teachers said.

"This is a historic event for our school," evaluated science teacher Anna Horowitz, who worked with the winning students on their project. "We all must admit we've heard our names. It was unbelievable."

Habte Isaac, 17, and partner Orin Abel, 16, beat out nearly 1,200 other students to win the top honor on May 29 at a science fair held at New York Hall of Science in Queens. The fair was sponsored by United Way of New York City and Citi Field.

The Prospect Heights students project, "The Microscopic View of Fort Tilden Pond," analyzed water samples at a previously unstudied pond in Gateway National Park, where fish and plants were being. Habte and Orin each won a \$150 savings bond and a new microscope, and their school received a \$100 prize, which officials said will go to the science department.

Habte, a senior from Flat



LAB WHIZZES Orin Abel (left) and Habte Isaac with teacher Anna Horowitz in Prospect Heights HS science room. The two students won first prize in recent science fair.

the science fair victory is a high point for the school, which had never before won a science competition that was held in-person. The biggest thing is the recognition that we have received. Who joined the school two years ago. It's an extraordinary that it's

Articles were written in several area newspapers including the NY Daily News (shown above).

In the fall of 2002 the Prospect Heights H.S. Science Department was awarded a \$2500 grant to conduct a community based science fair project. Ms. Horowitz, approached the Jamaica Bay Institute at Gateway National Recreation Area, requesting guidance and support in conducting a research experiment in the Park. She explained that since Gateway is in the students' backyard, it would be an ideal site for such community based science.

Fort Tilden pond is a natural spring-fed fresh water pond. Its native ecology suffers from introduced species such as goldfish and red-eared sliders which are dropped-in the pond, when they are no longer wanted as pets. Its chemistry is not routinely monitored by the park, due to its small size (0.02 acre). The water quality profile and biological inventory conducted by Prospect Heights students will be used by the park to evaluate the health of the pond and to determine strategies for improving this native habitat.

The Jamaica Bay Institute will continue to assist Prospect Heights H.S. in their monitoring of Fort Tilden Pond in preparation for next year's National Science Fair. JBI will extend an invitation to other highschools interested in conducting their science fair projects in Gateway NRA.